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RODENT CONTROL IN HAWAII

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Rats cause extensive damage in Hawaiian sugarcane fields and macadamia orchards and have been implicated in the demise of Hawaii's native flora and fauna. Zinc phosphide, the only rodenticide registered for agricultural use in Hawaii, frequently does not give adequate control. Since the inception of wide-scale zinc phosphide baiting in 1971, Norway rats have replaced polynesian rats as the depredating species; currently registered zinc phosphide baits are only marginally effective against the former species. Roof rats, the main species of concern in macadamia orchards, rapidly reinvade depopulated orchards. Several macadamia growers have expressed an interest in pursuing the registration of an anticoagulant rodenticide, which could be applied repeatedly to reduce reinvasion of their orchards without risking the development of bait-shy populations. Until recently, no materials were available to reduce rat populations in non-crop, terrestrial habitats. In July 1994, Eaton's All Weather Bait Block (0.005% diphacinone) received a SLN (24C) registration for use in such areas. Several research projects currently are planned to evaluate the efficacy and safety of this project to reduce rat populations in native Hawaiian forests.